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THE COMPANY AND THE ARTS

*The nation's leading
executives have some
surprising comments.*

"Industry," says President Jesse Werner of General Aniline & Film Corp., "is one of the major direct supports of architecture, graphic arts, industrial design and industrial music. Indirectly, through its advertising, it pays for literature, music, theater and fine arts. Even in the more esoteric activities of the arts, the trustees and patrons are heavily drawn from the ranks of businessmen. The look, sounds and words of America reflect the decisions of the business community."

Yet for all of their unsought influence on the cultural life of the nation, most businessmen are uncomfortable when discussing the arts or artists. For one thing, like the less worldly philosophers who write for literary quarterlies, executives have some difficulty in defining art and in explaining their own preferences.

For another, it is still considered extraordinary for a man of action to have sensitivity enough to appreciate the serenity of a Pissarro street scene or the tension of a de Kooning abstraction, even though businessmen such as Norton Simon and David Rockefeller have shown that artistic appreciation and money-making are not antithetical qualities. At the heart of this indecision, however, lies the corporation executive's nagging doubt about spending stockholders' money for any but business purposes.

Nevertheless, the role of the corporation in American society has so changed in recent years that some businessmen justify contributions to writers, symphony orchestras, cultural centers, painters, opera companies or corps de ballet as mere extensions of corporate activity.

JULY 1965

DUN'S REVIEW and Modern Industry

Bemoaning the fact that "the typical American corporation has so far shown very little enthusiasm for financial support of the performing arts," a recent Rockefeller Panel Report explains the positive benefits of such subsidies. As the report, *The Performing Arts: Problems and Prospects*, puts it: "The arts can be a major source of strength for the business community. They provide cultural resources increasingly recognized as essential to a suitable environment for business enterprise. Their presence or absence in a community frequently plays a role in the decision of personnel to join or stay with a company. Their availability certainly encourages new firms to locate in a city and helps attract tourists and conventions. . . . There are, therefore, compelling reasons why, in the interest of his community and, in-

deed, in his own self-interest, a businessman and his firm should be concerned with the cultural and artistic life of his community."

In order to discover the extent of corporate involvement in the arts, DUN'S REVIEW took the issue to the 300 business leaders who make up the Presidents' Panel. A series of questions was posed to these key executives, such as whether or not business has a responsibility to the arts, and the potential rewards and possible dangers of supporting culture. Moreover, DUN'S wondered, how can a company square with its shareholders the use of corporate funds to subsidize the artist?

From the forthright, overwhelmingly thoughtful and unmistakably sincere answers emerges a composite portrait by no means unflattering to today's busi-

ness leader. For whether he believes that direct corporate support for the arts is a good or bad thing, the man who guides American industry is both sensitive to the needs of the arts and devoted to their appreciation.

President John H. Daniels of Archer-Daniels-Midland Co. echoes the Rockefeller Panel report. "The more dynamic the community in the field of the arts," argues Daniels, "the greater the stimulus for existing employees and the greater the attraction to the community for new employees." Taking a somewhat different tack, although wholly in sympathy with Daniels, is Chairman Edwin R. Broden of SKF Industries. Broden cites the centuries-old tradition of business support of the arts. "If business does not," he warns, "it will abdicate its leadership role."